

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

November 12, 2025

9 AM

Attendance – CSRБ Members	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Absent Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian – Late 9:20 am Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope - Remote	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis Todd Godbey Gerald McNair Stephen Gay
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Megan Carter, Consultant Julie Whetzel, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker - Remote <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Dr. Jake Wilson – POY - Remote Lindsay Phillips – TOY - Remote

CSRБ Recording: [Day 1 - November NC Charter School Review Board - Nov. 12, 2025 - YouTube](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Bruce Friend

Recusal Guidelines for Renewal Votes: Steven Walker, CSRБ Attorney

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- Board members must recuse themselves if they sit on the board of a school under review or are employed by that school.
- Board members employed by an EMO or CMO must recuse themselves from decisions involving schools partnered with those organizations.
- Board members affiliated with charter schools that contract with an EMO/CMO are **NOT required to recuse themselves from** voting on other charter schools using the same EMO/CMO, provided they do not serve on the for-profit's board, are not officers or employees, and have no other statutory relationship.
- No questions were raised by board members following the legal guidance.

Mission and Ethics Statement:

- Mission and Ethics Statement, Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve agenda for November Meeting

Second: Dr. John Eldridge

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed

Motion: Dr. Rita Haire moved to approve October 2025 minutes.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed

Motion: Dr. John Eldridge moved to approve September 2025 Sub Campus Committee minutes.

Second: Lindalyn Kakadelis

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed

November 12 Charter Schools Review Board Meeting

Ready to Open (RTO) Update & Proposed Revisions to Minimum Requirements to Open: Ashley Logue, OCS Director

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Ashley Logue** presented comprehensive data showing that charter schools historically enroll approximately 20% fewer students than projected in their first year, with only 25% of schools meeting or exceeding original enrollment projections.
- **Data trends reveal critical concerns:** Earlier cohorts achieved approximately 50% success rate in meeting enrollment targets, while recent two-year cohorts show only approximately 30% success rate; schools frequently face closure within the first year due to enrollment failures.
- **Bruce Friend** emphasized that break-even budget may be more important than enrollment percentage, noting the example of TISA, which was "warned multiple times about minimum 80 students requirement, refused to delay or relinquish charter, voted to close, then immediately closed instead of using 90-day runway."
- **Eric Sanchez** raised concerns about enrollment verification and asked whether warning signs are visible in spring; **Ashley Logue confirmed** that numbers are accurate but schools are losing enrolled students due to parents applying to multiple schools or changing minds due to facility delays.
- **Dr. John Eldridge** attended the National Charter School Authorizers Conference and noted that North Carolina's application process appears stronger than other states; however, the "business

side of charters presents more issues than educational plans," with break-even budgets often not realistic and applicants "plugging in numbers to submit applications."

- **Dr. Shelly Shope** suggested shifting focus from enrollment percentage to budget requirements, proposing that "budget must come in UNDER current enrolled student numbers, not just at break-even."
- **Dr. Rita Haire** praised the presentation and supported adjustments; identified "gray areas" in current process when schools don't meet enrollment targets, noting that "judgment calls become problematic" and advocating for "firm minimums and automatic one-year delays in certain instances" rather than relying solely on board judgment.
- The board assigned "homework" for members to submit thoughts and ideas to Ashley Logue within two weeks to allow time for preparation of draft revisions.
- The board set a timeline for public comment (one month), board member feedback (two weeks), and planned presentation of draft readiness report and proposed process changes in December for approval and January implementation.

Amendments: Julie Whetzel, OCS Consultant

- GLOW – Mission Statement

Ms. Whetzel shared information included in the Executive Summary.

Motion: Hilda Parlér moved to approve GLOW's amended Mission Statement

Second: Eric Guckian

Vote: Unanimous

Recused: Todd Godbey, Eric Sanchez

☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed

STARS – RCA Expansion

Ms. Whetzel shared information included in the Executive Summary.

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Rationale for expansion:** School completed first year of operation with strong systems for online instruction, student onboarding, and student support; significant statewide interest from families seeking flexible online learning currently prevented by geographic limitations.
- **Interest documented from outside regional area:** Johnston County (3 students interested), Onslow County (2 students enrolled but ineligible), Charlotte area (2 students interested), coastal areas (interest noted).
- School indicated a fully virtual model (not blended); no specific LEA targeting; plan to establish 4-5 geographically central testing locations; staff willing to travel for test administration; currently have one dedicated EC person serving 7 students with IEPs; at 1,000 students would need to reassess capacity.
- **Lindalyn Kakedelis cautioned:** "Virtual schools have historically exceeded projections significantly" and advised "don't be surprised if statewide marketing results in larger numbers than projected."

- **Dr. Rita Haire raised concerns:** Current enrollment is 24 students from surrounding LEAs against projected 100; confidence level for reaching 200 next year questioned; school acknowledged poor conversion rate (10% vs. expected 30-40%) but indicated implementation of better tracking and automation systems.
- **Dr. Haire questioned budget:** "Budget shows no instructional personnel costs. How is instruction delivered?" School clarified using **Edmentum platform with North Carolina licensed teachers**, with STARS providing EC support and accommodations coordination; teachers available for live support typically within 5-10 minutes.

Motion: Bruce Friend moved to approve STARS' request for RCA Expansion

Second: Lindalyn Kakedelis

Vote: Unanimous

☒ **Passed** ☐ Failed

Monroe Academy – Relocation over 10-miles

Ms. Whetzel shared information included in the Executive Summary.

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Current situation:** School in Union County (Waxhaw) facing facility crisis; current site ECO deadline November 15, 2024; property owner (church pastor) refused in October 2024 to provide financial documentation required by NC Department of Environmental Quality and complete necessary well system installation; without ECO by November 15, 2024, school cannot operate at current site.
- **Proposed relocation:** Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, Matthews, Mecklenburg County; 11.5 miles from current location; meets occupancy requirements without well system upgrades; lower monthly rent (\$3,000 savings); actually closer/more convenient for most families than current site (20 minutes vs. 45-60 minutes).
- **Timeline:** Current site ECO deadline Friday, November 15, 2024; last day of instruction at current location November 15, 2024; planned move November 16-21, 2024; planned resumption November 25, 2024 (Monday); contingency plan: go virtual if ECO not ready.
- **School enrollment trends:** Declining enrollment ADM data provided; school has experienced three locations (original, Waxhaw, and proposed Matthews).
- **Family and parent support:** 100% of parents agree to move (confirmed via survey); 97% of parents support going virtual temporarily if needed; all families have internet access; school has one-to-one Chromebooks for all students.
- **Bruce Friend's concerns:** Confirmed no chance of obtaining ECO at current site; confirmed new site does not yet have ECO; expressed concern about predicament and tight timeline; noted uncertainty about county finding unforeseen issues; noted declining enrollment trend since 2019.
- **County coordination status:** Working with Mecklenburg County to obtain ECO; Fire marshal (Town of Matthews Chief Fire Marshal) visited site; in contact with Noah McNeely (Mecklenburg County Planning Department) and Tom Smith; no definitive timeline provided by county; maximum virtual period estimated at 2 weeks (speculation); Fall break follows first week back.

- **Dr. Rita Haire:** How did school move into the previous facility without ECO? School explained church had certificate of occupancy; conversion to educational CO required inspections; most items acceptable; well identified as problem; received variance and temporary certificate of occupancy; been working under extensions; school completed all required tasks and spent money; last piece was financial information from church to NC DEQ; pastor unexpectedly refused to provide documentation.
- **Dr. John Eldridge's academic concerns:** Monroe struggling academically; already behind their LEA; uncertain impact in Mecklenburg County performance comparison; currently in 3-year renewal process with possible 1-year recommendation; concern about impact of online learning transition, new building, resettling operations, and being halfway through school year on student outcomes.
- **Bruce Friend:** "Must separate relocation decision from renewal decision. Today's choice: Approve request or school ceases to exist Monday. School returns in less than 3 weeks (December meeting) for renewal."
- **Dr. Rita Haire's requirements for December:** Bring quantitative data, not just narrative; real budget numbers (last year's surplus not shown in submitted deficit budget); actual enrollment numbers; certificate of occupancy status; if not yet moved into building in December, need statement from county official with expected ECO timeline.
- **Principal's statement** expressed "unwavering faith" and overcame previous obstacles others doubted; only moving due to pastor's refusal on last document; noted lack of clear checklist from county for well requirements; requirements kept changing during process; contacted senators and DPI Superintendent Mo Green for help in August; school is small, not backed by large corporations; operating for the children; landlord's refusal came as complete shock.
- **Ashley Logue:** "Never-before-occurred situation"; for funding purposes, need physical location address; cannot approve as fully remote school without physical location; funding must be associated with Mt. Moriah Baptist Church address; remote learning allowed as emergency measure; question about whether ECO required for funding if students not in building—needs research.

Motion: Lindalyn Kakedelis moved to approve Monroe Academy's request for relocation over 10-miles

Second: Stephen Gay

Vote: Unanimous

Recuse: Eric Sanchez

☒ Passed ☐ Failed

Introduction to 2026 Charter Application Interviews: Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant

- Ms. Rackley reviewed the application process, legislation, and timeframe for applicant interviews.

Little Rock Preparatory Academy for Young Men: CMO Elevate Charter Schools - Standard

Introduction

- Ms. Melanie Rackley introduced the Board of Directors to the School; as well as their mission, number of students, and other details pertaining to their application. She also introduced the choices the CSRБ had regarding this application.

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Applicant's opening statement:** Emphasized research supporting single-gender education showing higher confidence levels, greater classroom participation, and improved academic outcomes; focus on emotional and mental health alongside academic excellence; family and community engagement through workshops and volunteer programs targeting male guardians; comparison data showing all-male charter schools achieving higher graduation rates, improved attendance, and stronger college enrollment.
- **Grade level start point:** Why propose starting at grades 9-12 rather than kindergarten through 8, noting students arriving in 9th grade have already experienced years of influences better addressed at younger ages? **Response:** Demographic analysis identified greatest need at high school level where mentorship is critically lacking; goal to impact students at this level so they influence younger siblings and families; plans to eventually move grade levels backward.
- **CMO expertise:** While application states CMO chosen for expertise in single-gender schools and high school education, this experience is not evident in current school portfolio. **Response: Mr. John Taylor, CEO of Elevate Charter Schools,** founded Green Tech High in Albany, New York (all-male high school) which he founded and operated before establishing Elevate; prior experience informs proposed model.
- **Curriculum development:** Requested specifics on how curriculum will be developed to engage young men. **Response:** Curriculum will supplement North Carolina's standard course of study with materials focusing on culturally responsive education for African American boys; curriculum data-driven, student-interest focused, developed through student inventories and surveys.
- **Athletics and extracurriculars:** Asked about athletics and extracurricular offerings; noted no budget allocation for real intervention dollars for students entering below grade level. **Response:** Students could participate in athletics at their assigned home schools (schools they would have attended if not enrolled in charter); extracurricular activities would focus on visual arts and music education. **Board members questioned viability,** noting Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools does not typically allow charter school students to participate in traditional public school athletics and that this would likely be "an uphill battle."
- **Interventions and counseling:** Raised concerns about lack of budgeted interventions and catch-up services for population specifically targeting under-resourced students entering below grade level, combined with only half a counselor in year one. **Response:** Applicant acknowledged needing more robust intervention plans; committed to providing extended learning, learning extensions, enrichment, intentional EOC preparation, after-school support, and one-on-one services.
- **Gender stereotypes and student identity support:** Asked how school would create an environment for students to explore identities related to gender stereotypes, particularly with limited counselor support. **Response:** Board indicated this would be addressed through focused learning environment and curriculum design.

- **Racial/ethnic composition and board diversity:** Application emphasizes African American and Latino boys specifically; questioned whether other races would be served; raised concerns about board racial diversity. **Response:** Clarified while they mention these populations because they represent the majority in Charlotte's disadvantaged communities, the school is open to students of any race facing disadvantage; regarding board diversity, no specific commitments made at this time.
- **Demand data:** Application lacks specific data demonstrating demand for all-male grades 9-12 school. **Response:** Applicant committed to producing data showing family commitments and interest levels.
- **Financial concerns:** Year 1 surplus; first-year enrollment historically lower at many schools; Years 2-3 show tight margins and budget concerns; management fee structure in draft contract is lower than proposed budget which applies higher percentages; Year 3 shows lease costs doubling and contract fees increasing dramatically; budget shows deficit position without external funding. **Response:** CMO would be "last paid" if shortfalls occur; emphasized planned community fundraising; board members serve on other boards with philanthropic connections; one member recently donated \$1 million to their board; indicated external funds category represents fundraising efforts; do not yet have contract locked with Elevate specifying exact fees.
- **CMO services agreement:** Agreement has fewer pages compared to other CMO agreements reviewed; missing sections on liability, state-required language, and clear role definitions; no specification of what services warrant different fee percentages; no term limit in agreement; missing sections on responsibility for marketing and other key operational areas; statement that CMO would be "last paid" not included in written agreement. **Response:** Applicant acknowledged agreement under review and will be expanded; **Mr. Taylor** explained that in Connecticut, only a term sheet required until after charter approval; provided generic term sheet; noted they have more comprehensive agreements for existing schools; emphasized Elevate funded by foundation community and does not rely on school fees for sustainability; actual contracts include "based on ability to pay" language and "last to be paid," though draft may not reflect final language.
- **Mr. John Taylor's presentation on CMO experience:** Founded Green Tech High in 2006 in Albany, New York, starting with 9th grade, became model all-male school with high graduation rates; founded Booker T. Washington Academy in Connecticut, launching with K and 1st graders, achieving #3 status in state math and #1 in reading; founded Elevate as CMO when asked to take on leadership of Danbury International Academy while maintaining commitment to Booker T. Washington; Booker T. Washington experienced COVID-related performance decline but recovered, achieving school of distinction status for growth and #1 ranking among high-need schools for student outcomes; also took on Edmonds Cofield Preparatory Academy for Young Men, single-gender school launching this year with no performance data yet available.
- **Curriculum and instructional approach:** Proposed curriculum not unique curriculum but rather incorporates instructional strategies responsive to how boys learn, including culturally responsive approaches, gender-specific teaching strategies based on research and lived experience, selection of materials boys relate to, incorporation of competition in classroom settings, use of project-based learning tied to real-world applications; meeting all state-required textbooks and standard course of study while supplementing.

- **CMO operational support:** Facilities management, student information systems, financial procedures and policies guidance, food services and transportation support, human resources and talent recruitment, student recruitment, academic program support.
- **CMO funding model:** Elevate not large EMO but small, mission-driven CMO; funded by foundation community that believes in their approach; do not rely on school fees for sustainability; current schools not charged management fees in year one when they cannot afford it; actually loan money to schools when needed for cash flow issues; contracts include "based on ability to pay" language and "last to be paid" provisions; not seeking to maximize revenue from schools.
- **Board question on Green Tech High:** Whether school inspiring this application (Green Tech High) was part of Elevate's portfolio. **Response:** Founded Green Tech in 2006, left in 2011, and Elevate does not operate that school, though he maintains informal connections with its board and former students.

Motion: Todd Godbey moved to deny Little Rock Preparatory Academy for Young Men's charter application.

Second: Bruce Friend

Vote: 9:1

Nay: Gerald McNair

- ☒ Passed ☐ Failed

OCS Renewal Presentations: Jenna Cook, OCS Consultant

Thomas Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **School overview:** Serves both residential and community students in grades K-12; residential program for students in state custody; community-based day program; recently expanded to include younger grades (K, 1st, 2nd) to serve sibling groups; Teaching Family Model for behavioral instruction; guaranteed four-year college scholarships at North Carolina state universities (or out-of-state institutions) for graduates through partnership scholarships from generous donors; one recent graduate authored a book and spoke at school graduation; board member is former residential student of academy.
- **Student population:** Approximately half residential students and half community students; residential students typically serve from several months to multiple years depending on state custody status; community students typically remain through graduation.
- **Teacher retention:** Asked about "retaining teachers" challenge listed on presentation slide, questioning whether significant teacher turnover existed. **Response:** Not about teacher turnover but rather meeting state requirement of 50% certified teachers; school works with newly certified teachers through NCEES process to assist them in becoming fully licensed; some teachers have

lifetime certifications while others need to renew lapsed licenses; school helps all teachers navigate these requirements.

- **Student retention and outcomes:** Asked about average student tenure and tracking of former students' academic performance. **Response:** Community students typically stay until graduation; residential students' tenure varies based on state custody status (months to years); school has tracked former students, with many returning to work at Boys and Girls Homes in North Carolina; former residential student now sits on school's board; one graduate became an author who recently spoke at graduation.
- **Request:** Expressed interest in seeing disaggregated performance data specifically for community students (present year-round) rather than residential students to better reflect school's academic performance. **Response:** School indicated they have this data available and offered to provide it.
- **State requirements for residential placements:** Asked about high turnover of residential students and specific reasons. **Response:** State requires Boys and Girls Homes to return students to parents, guardians, foster homes, or adoption as quickly as possible; this state law mandate creates continuous turnover in residential population; when entrance and withdrawal data tracked carefully, school serves over 150 students annually, though enrollment appears more stable when only current enrollment is considered.
- **Teaching Family Model implementation:** Asked why Teaching Family Model implementation was listed as inconsistent when it showed a percentage on data. **Response:** At beginning of each school year, all teachers receive refresher on Teaching Family Model; school has two behavior specialists and assistant principal serving as consultant for model; assistant principal evaluates teachers specifically on Teaching Family Model implementation while principal evaluates on curriculum implementation.
- **Data comparison methodology:** Asked for clarification on comparison between Thomas Academy students and Columbus County Schools students, noting these may be different populations. **Response:** Staff clarified comparison shows all K-12 students in Columbus County Schools compared to Thomas Academy students; subgroup data for alternative schools not publicly released, so comparison is of all Columbus County students regardless of standing versus Thomas Academy's student population; this represents apples-to-oranges comparison but is the data available for analysis.
- **Board commendations:** Appreciated school's candor about their challenges; praised school's tracking of former students and visible success stories; recognized value of scholarship partnership providing four-year college guarantees.

Commonwealth Charter School and Stewart Creek Charter School

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Commonwealth Charter School overview:** Alternative charter school serving students who have struggled in traditional settings; uses CT courses online and classroom instruction; actively participates in Career and College Promise pathways; graduation requirements aligned with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools; self-paced program allowing student flexibility; "My Success Dashboard" provides student transparency on progress and credit requirements; strong leadership team noted as "incredible."

- **Stewart Creek Charter School overview:** Alternative charter school with similar mission to Commonwealth; uses Second Mile Education framework; unique "My Success Dashboard" system created by their organization; allows students to take ownership of education and practice self-advocacy; students can select class order (while maintaining core requirements); helps students visualize needed skills and develop self-advocacy.
- **Collaboration:** Noted excellent collaboration between Commonwealth and Stewart Creek; common mission across both schools visible in similar presentations; praised governance structure as key factor in school success; both schools demonstrate "good governance."
- **Curriculum and programs:** Asked about CTE courses online usage and Career and College Promise pathways. **Response:** Both schools confirmed they use CTE courses online and actively participate in Career and College Promise.
- **Graduation requirements:** Asked whether schools follow state minimum credits or have their own requirements. **Response:** Schools align with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools credits, exceeding state minimum.
- **Assessment data disconnect:** Noted stark disconnect between test score data and success stories being presented. **Response:** School leader emphasized that standard course, end-of-course tests represent one day of proving learned material; more important is seeing student growth and students completing graduation despite being told "you're probably not even gonna get out of middle school" four years prior; test scores don't always reflect growth students experience; three students highlighted in presentation put a "picture" to what numbers mean; students achieving graduation is real measure of success for this population.
- Acknowledged public may be confused by comparing test scores to growth data; emphasized importance of sharing success stories alongside data.
- **Student transience:** Asked how long students typically stay. **Response:** Motivated students may complete faster; duration depends on individual student goals.
- **Comparison to other alternative schools:** Noted Commonwealth's performance compared to another alternative school showed English EOC proficiency rates higher, which more comparable than comparing to all Columbus County schools. **Response:** Board agreed this comparison approach more appropriate.
- **Relationship with district:** Noted that Commonwealth and Stewart Creek provide valuable service to the school system by serving students the district cannot reach, potentially saving district from negative accountability data. **Response:** School confirms district is very supportive and sees value in partnership; district recognizes Commonwealth and Stewart Creek serve students they are unable to reach; it's about serving all children, not just district vs. charter labels.
- **Board member comment:** "This is an example to me of also where a charter school can be of good service to the school system... you're saving them, too."
- **Charter renewal term length:** Asked what difference a longer renewal cycle would make to school. **Response:** School leader indicated longer renewal cycle means more opportunity to support students; they have touched so many lives but continue to identify new groups of students with different needs; longer cycle would mean opportunity to continue building professionally, serve more students, allow students' siblings to enroll, and allow former students to build on their experiences.
- **Board commendations:** Commended Tamara and Morgan for "incredible" leadership and noted it's "hard work"; praised governance collaboration between two schools, noting "people underrate

how important good governance is"; expressed appreciation for Second Mile Education framework and work being done; emphasized importance of partnership between schools and districts.

NC Cyber Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **School designation:** Remote Charter Academy (previously pilot program with multiple extensions).
- **Program offerings:** Full-time virtual school with K-12 programs; uses Canvas learning platform and Zoom for video conferencing; "Full flex" option for elementary students (live instruction with cameras on required); traditional tier option with attendance requirements.
- **Attendance tracking:** Elementary students must attend live with cameras on through the day with ELA and math daily; secondary varies by tier placement.
- **Attendance definition and calculation:** Asked how attendance is calculated in a virtual environment, noting different students choose virtual for different reasons. **Response:** Attendance based on participation in classes on given day; students must log in and participate in activities (via Canvas or Zoom) during class time, not just record interaction; elementary "full flex" requires students attend live with cameras on and be present all day; students not meeting threshold placed on traditional tier requiring live attendance for all four instructional blocks.
- School representatives emphasized that attendance standards shifted significantly from years ago when software interaction alone counted; now standards mirror traditional schools requiring actual attendance/participation.
- **Latitude for alternative schedules:** Asked what latitude given to students (especially high school) with athletic pursuits, medical situations, or acting careers who might not fit a 9-5 school schedule. **Response:** Students able to maintain at or above in their classes can be placed on "full flex" tier and receive credit for work/attendance; students not meeting this threshold must attend traditional tier with live attendance requirements for all four daily blocks; school has moved away from a more lenient approach used years ago.
- **Math performance issues:** Asked why there is "systematic issue with math in the secondary" and what practices are being implemented, noting middle school and high school math growth data not at desired levels even though overall proficiency increased. **Response:** Middle school working diligently on PLCs (Professional Learning Communities); focusing on curriculum alignment and depth of knowledge questions; noticed students staying at DOK 1 level while EOG and EOC tests not at that level; this year's focus is tracking information and having two PLCs per week to review end-of-course data and make data-driven instructional decisions; currently using self-created curriculum based on DPI resources, Math in the Middle, and other curriculum resources creating comprehensive curriculum plan guide K-12.
- **Attendance enforcement and consequences:** Asked what consequences exist if students don't meet attendance requirements and whether school tracks this. **Response:** Students counted absent if they miss attendance requirements; accumulation of absences leads to intervention; counselors intervene, teachers intervene, messages sent home; attendance team at each grade level provides interventions; if students miss too many days, may be administratively withdrawn; school attempts to provide maximum assistance before withdrawal.

- **Truancy procedures:** Asked if school handles truancy or refers to home school. **Response:** Last step in process is referral to home school; before withdrawal, school sends warning letter about consequences; refers information to home school to ensure family compliance with compulsory attendance law; school has attendance specialists, counselors, and social workers who intervene extensively before reaching this point; acknowledges this is school of choice and sometimes not best fit.
- **Administrative withdrawals:** Asked if school had to refer students back to their home school. **Response:** Yes, when administratively withdrawn, communication sent to the home school district indicating the child is "administratively withdrawn and is domiciled in your school district."
- **Renewal guidelines for Remote Charter Academies:** Asked why there are no specific guidelines for Remote Charter Academies. **Response from Ashley Logue:** Legislation for Remote Charter Academies includes no renewal guidelines; simply states "two statewide virtual academies shall be approved as remote charter academies" and ends the pilot; this is a new process with no established guidelines for renewals.
- The school operated as pilot without renewal guidelines, with the General Assembly extending pilot multiple times; questioned if OCS thinks guidelines should be considered. **Response:** This is something that should be addressed.
- Knowing the number of administratively withdrawn students would be important information for renewal vote.
- **Follow-up note:** Board agreed to circle back with NC Cyber Academy before renewal vote to obtain administrative withdrawal numbers.
- **Board commentary:** Appreciated strong data presentation and school's transparency about attendance tracking changes from years ago.

NC Virtual Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Student population:** Serves many students significantly behind grade level; intensive remediation programs for students 2 or more grade levels behind; credit recovery program for high school students.
- **Program structure:** Two-tier remediation approach with "bubble kids" (about one year behind) and Tier 2 (MTSS/skill-based, individual student focus); recently implementing intensive remediation tier; goal to help students develop foundational skills so they can access current grade-level content; not intended to keep students in remediation long-term.
- **Enrollment management:** School has capped enrollment in November to maintain stability; waiting lists exist with more students wanting to attend than being served; enrollment closed in November to provide full semesters of the same student body for teacher focus; trends show importance of stability for consistent student body for teacher effectiveness.
- **Intensive remediation population:** Asked what percentage of students fall into intensive remediation programs. **Response:** Indicates concern given proficiency increases but growth decrease.
- **Remediation strategy:** Asked how school addresses students years behind when focusing mainly on "bubble kids" (one year behind). **Response:** Started including Tier 2 remediation (MTSS),

skill-based and individual to student; now implementing intensive remediation tier specifically for those significantly behind; goal is build foundational skills so students can access current learning; recognition that elementary remediation critical to stem cascade of deficiencies into middle and high school; acknowledgment that high school more difficult as courses become more rigorous and complex.

- **High school credit deficiency:** Asked what school finds on average when high school students arrive with credit deficiencies and no prior credits. **Response:** No one-size-fits-all approach; each student assessed individually; credit recovery program in high school has been successful; uses three-year or four-year graduation tracks as needed; counselors work diligently on graduation plans with each student.
- **Enrollment cap rationale:** Asked why school caps enrollment if they have a waiting list suggesting more demand than capacity. **Response:** School has capped enrollment in November as a deliberate strategy based on experience observing trends year over year; closing enrollment in November provides more than a full semester of the same student body; consistency of classroom and teacher stability important to help students meet grade level and cross finish line; more important than maximizing enrollment numbers.
- **Data monitoring inconsistency:** Asked about statement regarding "inconsistent and ineffective data monitoring," noting school has had 6-year pilot plus 2 more years of operation; asked what factors made data capture incapacity so persistent. **Response:** Transient student population moving from place to place; virtual school often seen as "last resort"; unknown backgrounds and prior knowledge of students makes effective data use difficult; school recognizes data capture itself may not be main issue, but rather teacher effectiveness in using data in classroom; starting January implementing coaching cycle to help teachers not just look at data but how to implement it; goal is to teach teachers how to effectively facilitate application of data in classroom through professional development.
- **Coaching and implementation:** Asked if response addressed question about why data monitoring seems ineffective. **Response:** School acknowledged while they can pull data, key factor is how teachers effectively implement that data; the coaching cycle starting in January will focus on in-depth analysis of not just looking at data but how to implement it in the classroom; most teachers need coaching on this implementation step.
- **Administrative withdrawal data:** Asked how many students have been administratively withdrawn in the last two years. **Response:** Not all for truancy—some withdrew themselves or identified as potential truancy issues at some point in process.
- **Follow-up details:** School requires live class attendance with participation or ability to watch recordings; extensive attendance policy tracks minute-by-minute detail on recordings; can pull data showing if student was present but only for minutes, left early, or participated; can track camera on/off status and participation; systems quite detailed in tracking attendance.
- **Board member:** Expressed desire for administrative withdrawal data and indicated would love to receive minute-by-minute data details. **Response:** School indicated they have all this data from recent deep dive and can send to Jenna to forward to board.

Experiential Charter School of Greensboro

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **School overview:** Located in the heart of downtown Greensboro; partnership with university for teacher preparation; new teachers coming through teacher intern/student teacher programs; many beginning teachers (1-3 years experience) on staff.
- **Academic performance:** Achieving growth, closing gap with school district year over year; currently on Continuously Low Performing (CLP); working toward "met growth" status.
- **Comparable demographics:** Presentation includes achievement scores compared across schools with similar demographics; compared to schools in Guilford County Schools.
- **Enrollment decline:** Asked why enrollment declined over past years despite the school's work. **Response:** New schools have been built in Guilford County; some students and families choosing to attend those new schools because of programs they offer; school's response is going to local events, advertising through social media, talking to community daily about TESSG's existence; many folks don't know TESSG exists in community; school emphasizes location ("right there in downtown Greensboro, across from train station") when recruiting.
- **University partnership:** Asked about partnership with University, noting background with that institution. **Response:** School has partnership with University for teacher preparation; teachers come over as interns and student teachers; school has several new 1-3 year teachers through this partnership; noted as "good to have a resource like them right in the backyard to help get your teachers what they need."
- **Leadership continuity:** Encouraged school to keep doing what it's doing; emphasized "leadership, consistent, and ongoing leadership is important"; noted school is in third year; "Thank you for staying with it, and I just encourage you to continue to do that. And you can make the difference by doing that."
- **Progress recognition:** "I really thank you... I am thankful that you're at that school. I can see the progress in the test scores starting to get the trajectory that you're looking for. You guys have been closing the gap in the school district every year for the last several years so I'm excited and hope that next year it's a met growth. And get off that CLP, right?"
- **Data presentation comment:** Appreciated school putting achievement scores across schools of similar demographics; criticized district definition of "percentage points" as "ridiculous" and complimented school's approach.
- **Overall comment:** "Thank you guys for your presentation, good luck."

Summit Creek Charter School

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **School overview:** School performance data presentation included subgroup breakdowns and comparisons; achievement scores comparable to district data.
- **Waiting list:** Asked how many students are on the waiting list. **Response:** Over 100 students currently on the waiting list.
- **Data quality and presentation:** Praised quality of data presentation, specifically requesting schools seeking longer renewal terms to present comparable subgroup data similar to Summit Creek's model. **Response:** Data presentation was commended as exemplary of what should be presented when schools request more than recommended renewal term.
- **Board member comment:** "Great, great presentation. You guys should be proud of the work that you're doing over there."

Classical Academy - Wilmington

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Program features:** Dress for Success program on last Thursday of each month (school photos showed kindergarten students dressed for success); serves students from multiple counties; student population noted for specific qualities.
- **Targeted subgroup:** Made note regarding slide about targeted groups, noting statute was changed regarding how schools can serve targeted subgroups, especially if in mission statement. **Response from OCS:** OCS confirms they instruct schools they can make this argument and ask schools to bring data so they can advocate for serving targeted subgroups.
- **Geographic service area:** Asked if school has students outside the county where school resides and if this impacts comparability data. **Response:** School has some students from Pender County and a few from Hanover County. This does not impact comparability.

Adjourn: 4:25 pm

Minutes of the North Carolina Charter School Review Board

State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction

November 13, 2025

9 AM

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jeremy Wall- (nonvoting) Dr. Rita Haire Dr. John Eldridge Eric Guckian Hilda Parlér Dr. Shelly Shope	Eric Sanchez Bruce Friend Lindalyn Kakadelis - Absent Todd Godbey Gerald McNair Stephen Gay
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i> Ashley Baquero, Director Joseph Letterio, Consultant - Remote Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jenna Cook, Consultant Dr. Natasha Norins, Consultant Dr. Brandi Gill, Consultant Megan Carter, Consultant Nicky Niewinski, Asst. Director Julie Whetzel, Consultant	<i>CSRБ Attorney</i> Steven Walker <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer - Absent <i>Teacher/Principal of Year</i> Dr. Jake Wilson– POY - Remote Lindsay Phillips – TOY

CSRБ Recording: [Day 2 - November NC Charter School Review Board - Nov. 13, 2025](#)

Call To Order

Pledge of Allegiance & NC Flag Salute: Bruce Friend, Board Chair

Mission and Ethics Statement:

Pinesprings Preparatory Academy: Bruce Friend, Superintendent

Staff members from Pinesprings Preparatory Academy shared experience supporting schools in Tanzania.

Renewal Presentations: Jenna Cook, OCS Director

Next Generation Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter history:** First chartered in 2018; renewed in 2023 with stipulations.
- **Academic performance:** Consistently performed at D in the last three years; met growth in all three years.
- **Status:** On a continually low performing list for the last three years.
- **Comparability:** Not comparable to LEA overall; comparable with some individual subgroups.
- **Compliance:** Completed all stipulations; currently on financial non-compliance probationary status; transition to Infinite Campus ongoing.
- **Financial report by Brian Moore (Treasurer, Licensed CPA):** Clean audit opinions for past three years; positive fund balance exceeding \$400,000 in each year; positive cash balance exceeding \$200,000 in each year; enrollment growth from 407 to 414 to 457 students; debt reduction of \$526,181 over three years (combination of equipment loans, legal settlements, playground equipment, bus, and security equipment).
- **Board request:** Requested clarification on debt amount; requested that school provide a summary of financial numbers rather than presenting verbally.
- **Academic report:** Growth story of improvement and resilience; growth scores ranging from 77 to 84.7 (with 84.7 being 0.3 points away from exceeding growth); science proficiency at 50% overall, with 64.7% for grade 8; overall composite score improved from 36.8 (2023) to 41.6 (2024); middle school proficiency performing well, outperforming LEA in some subgroups; challenges identified in grade 3, 4, and 5 math.
- **Improvements and initiatives:** Vertical teaming collaboration between grade levels; esports program implementation with students competing nationally and internationally; two students won scholarships (\$1,000 and \$5,000) through esports competition; new math coaches hired for struggling areas; academic coaches providing tutoring opportunities both after school and during school day; individual data meetings with teachers; school improvement plan addressing every academic concern; targeted intervention opportunities and specialized instructors.
- **Infinite Campus compliance:** Asked about ongoing challenges with Infinite Campus implementation. **Response:** School experienced same challenges as other schools statewide; fully implemented system; not aware of current ongoing problems; attends compliance meetings and works with financial provider; indicated readiness for phase two.
- **Third grade math:** Requested three specific adjustments for third grade math/reading. **Response:** Targeted support for teachers meeting weekly with math coaches learning different skills and tasks; vertical collaboration among grade 3, 4, and 5 teachers; data meetings with

individual teachers discussing student performance data and improvement plans; grouping students strategically based on performance for targeted support.

- **Enrollment growth:** Asked about strategies for positive enrollment trends. **Response:** Robust marketing using multiple platforms; proximity to schools that are closing in area; strong word-of-mouth about student growth; esports program driving enrollment as it addresses community need; students with significant progress (example: EC students reaching Level 3 or 4 on EOG in one year).
- **Two or more races subgroup:** Asked about interventions for students identifying as two or more races. **Response:** This smaller subgroup (10-12 students); school implements same strategies for all students.
- **Financial discussion:** Board member asked about discrepancy where school reports three years of clean audits but office of charter schools notes total expenditures exceed total revenue by 1.5 million and current asset to liability ratio is 0.69. **Response from Mr. Moore:** Financial probationary status information is from FY23 audit; current assets to current liabilities ratio decreased from 0.69 (FY23) to 0.56 (FY24); total liabilities decreased from \$1.9 million (2023) to \$1 million (2024) to \$500,000 (2025); positive cash balance and fund balance over \$400,000; school paying bills on time and not in danger of running out of cash; current ratio fluctuations are timing-related for payments.
- **Financial position clarification:** Mr. Moore clarified that from a total balance sheet standpoint, the school is in much stronger financial position than previously, with total liabilities reduced significantly.

Rocky Mount Preparatory Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter history:** First chartered in 1997; renewed in 2023 for three years with stipulations.
- **Academic performance:** F and did not meet growth (2022-23 and 2023-24); D and exceeded growth (2024-25).
- **Status:** On continually low performing list for three years; removed from low performing list when exceeded growth.
- **Comparability:** Not comparable to LEA in any of the last three years.
- **Compliance:** Submitted approved school improvement plan; completed leadership and teacher training; did not meet stipulation of meeting/exceeding growth in two of three years (only met in year three); no financial compliance warnings; at risk for legal compliance (two items noted).
- **Financial compliance:** Office of school nutrition indicated school will undergo additional administrative review due to continued concerns about program oversight; Office of Digital Learning and School Connectivity reported ongoing challenges with Infinite Campus transition.
- **School's Opening Remarks:** Welcomed board and highlighted school's 27-year history in Rocky Mount community serving multiple surrounding counties; emphasized school's commitment to college preparatory education; noted board's improvements shown in current statistics demonstrating continual improvement.
- **Academic progress by Dr. Heather Collins (Head of School):** Data shows strategic persistence with focus on instructional coherence, targeted interventions, and accountability systems; clear

upward trajectory, particularly in English language arts and math with measurable growth in science; three-year trend data comparison with Nash County provided.

- **Data context:** Small subgroup populations; Nash County whole district with hundreds of students in each subgroup; difference in scale matters: when subgroup has 10-20-30 scholars, one student's performance can shift percentages by 8-15%; in district subgroup with 500+ students, two-student change barely registers; school's data appears to have more dramatic swings due to statistical sensitivity with small numbers.
- **Grade 9-12 testing:** school surpassed Nash County schools in black student subgroup in 2024-25 school year; prior years trailed by less than two percentage points (often statistically negligible margins); improved outcomes direct result of data-informed instruction, professional development, and consistent monitoring/alignment to NC standard course of study.
- **Three critical areas for continued improvement:** Academic and performance progress—pushing from growth to sustained proficiency; staff retention and morale—building consistency in instruction through teacher support and leadership coaching; school climate and scholar engagement—fostering belonging through relationship-centered teaching and positive behavior systems.
- **Key achievements:** School performance grade improved from F to D (2024-25); exceeded academic growth for first time in decade; launched wall-to-wall careermics in high school creating college/workforce pathways; achieved full AVID implementation across middle and high school; reestablished PTO and improved family engagement; disciplinary incidents decreased by 10%; expanded career and technical education from grades 5-12; eighth graders now have access to hands-on career pathways.
- **Four key goals:** Academic growth—increase proficiency in ELA, math, and science with focused supports for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners; instructional excellence—strengthen practices through evidence-based instruction, PLC collaboration, and targeted coaching; student supports—expand MTSS framework for academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success; data-driven decisions—utilize EVASS, NC check-ins, and formative assessments.
- **Key strategies:** Full curriculum alignment to NC standards; targeted tutoring and after-school programs; quarterly professional development on literacy, math, and culturally responsive practices; monthly data reviews with leadership and board team.
- **Request:** School requested bold five-year renewal but understands board would approve three-year renewal.
- **Economic development impact:** Asked how economic development in the county has impacted school, families, and business partnerships. **Response:** Rocky Mount has been 55,000-person community for last 20 years; city struggles with bringing in new industry; in 1970s, industries moved from northeast to south for cheaper labor; now all businesses have left; first moved to Mexico for 2-3 years, then to China; personal experience in 14 years at Nash Rocky Mount Schools, enrollment declined from 18,400 to 16,000. **Dr. Collins:** Rocky Mount struggles with population growth and industrial growth; when there's not robust economic growth, cannot be robust economic growth among students and families; students face challenges many shrinking or non-growing areas face; school emphasizes three things for graduates: excellence, college preparation or trades/career choices, thorough preparation.

- **Hispanic population:** Asked about success with Hispanic students and population numbers. **Response:** Small Hispanic population of approximately 10 students in the entire school.
- **Enrollment decline:** Asked about declining enrollment and context. **Response:** Statement was made by office of charter schools that Rocky Mount Prep might close; statement went to newspapers causing community fear; mass exodus of families seeking other placement options; once matters resolved and school found in compliance with no other concerns, no retraction made; community still fears closure; school launching new marketing campaigns to reach families and school districts; currently at 866 students and slowly reclaiming population; impacted by that particular meeting.
- **Black student performance:** Asked about black student performance context given lower results compared to LEA. **Dr. Collins response:** Ballpark black population approximately 97.5% of school; acknowledged some struggles compared to LEA (12% vs. 7.4%). **Response addressed disciplinary matters:** School educates students through lottery; perception was that prep was where unsuccessful students were sent; had to provide discipline, structure, and supports for students with social-emotional challenges before addressing academics; enhanced family engagement and teacher supports on positive behavioral reinforcement and restorative justice practices; suspension rates went down allowing more classroom time for learning; now see fewer behavioral issues than when leadership started.
- **Leader support:** Asked what kind of support Dr. Collins, as leader, is receiving. **Response:** Has wonderful, engaged board; participates in workshops; given necessary resources to make school successful; grateful for partnerships with other head of schools and superintendents who serve as advisors; makes trips to visit other schools to see what others are doing; grateful for support received.
- **Statistical data explanation:** Board member thanked Dr. Collins for articulating challenges when dealing with statistical data and subgroup information, noting this is something the board discusses regularly.
- **Attendance rates:** Asked about teacher and student attendance challenges. **Response:** Student attendance 85-87% daily, which is low and challenging; teacher attendance 95% daily, which is extremely good.

Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter history:** First chartered in 2013; renewed in 2023 for three years with stipulations.
- **Academic performance:** D for three consecutive years; met or exceeded growth in all three years.
- **Status:** On continually low performing list for three years but not on low performing list this year (exceeded growth).
- **Comparability:** Not comparable to LEA in the last three years but have some subgroup comparability.
- **Compliance:** Completed required items; no current compliance concerns (prior items closed).
- **Financial:** Placed on financial non-compliance cautionary status in October for signs of financial weakness including declining membership (10% or more decline).

- **Academic focus by Dr. Stacy Owens Howard (Principal/Executive Director):** When school received three-year renewal with stipulations, set path to focus on math, having already improved reading from F to C status; implemented teacher pedagogy improvements for math instruction.
- **Proficiency trends:** Math proficiency going in right direction; science healthy grade level proficiency (only 20 students tested last year, didn't meet minimum); previous focus always on growth given population served; recent focus increase proficiency and career and college readiness; more students reaching fours and fives; border line twos moved to threes.
- **Grade level compatibility:** Not within five-point difference state required; over years, closed gap from 30 points down to 19 points; making double-digit growth (7-10 points) annually.
- **Subgroup performance:** Focus on Hispanic, black, and economically disadvantaged students; scoring within 5-10 point difference or outscoring district.
- **IPG grant funds:** Received IPG grant funds at time of renewal; previously worked with limited resources; had to implement in stages; grant funds allowed expedited implementation of planned pieces.
- **School culture and environment:** Created environment where teachers, students, and leaders can improve; teacher efficacy was a struggle; now environment feels good with buy-in from teachers; 100% of staff participating in school values and norms; "Continue to do more with less"; still focus on the whole child beyond academics.
- **Teacher training program:** All teachers receive 200 hours of professional development; school is 4-day school; every Monday involves professional development aligned with mission and model; recognized need to become a teacher training program given many teachers lack experience with the school's population and nature of current education; formula developed and working well.
- **National partnerships:** Works with national partners not in it for money (given school budget) but for mission; national partners visit monthly and work with teachers weekly via Zoom.
- **Challenges:** Hard work to maintain daily energy needed for emotions and confidence; challenge of formula—when new kids don't know "the ZECA way," questioning if formula is working; balancing new teachers learning way while maintaining program fidelity; triangular effect holding parents, teachers, and staff accountable; population typically wouldn't see parent involvement; implemented parent training program; monthly parent trainings built on relationships to overcome parent fear of building.
- **Enrollment landscape:** Three years ago, community around school shut down; apartments emptied and company bought them; rebuilding process longer than expected due to legal issues with city; put 110% energy into changing narrative after closure discussions (said loudly when wouldn't close, said quietly when overturned); didn't focus on marketing initially; focused on changing narrative and getting test scores up; hovered around current student numbers trying to make it work; resulted in non-compliance warning but school has story to tell now; working on branding to get enrollment up; intention to stay small to maintain impact.
- **Next steps model:** Four major things: student engagement—all kids engaged, "no call on one" model where every student engaged at all times; cooperative learning structures in place; using AI for creating DOK questions and DOK units for lessons at DOK 2-3 level; still with A+ school; trauma approach model addressing traumas developed; further initiatives detailed in provided model document.

- **Request:** Asking for five-year renewal (vs. three-year standard for continually low performing schools).
- **Rationale for five-year request:** Federal folks indicated low performance list hold due to Part B (career and college ready portion); over 97% of state (good or bad schools, A or B schools) not meeting Part B requirement; state side continuously exceeding two of last three years; tracking to exceed this year to clear continual improvement requirement; three-year renewal puts school right back in process without time to do real work; five years would make community feel safer that ZECA turned around.
- **Board changes:** Asked if there had been changes to board membership. **Response:** Still same board.
- **Transportation:** Asked if school provides transportation. **Response:** One regular school bus going across district and small 14-passenger bus for hub stops in outskirts.
- **Facility capacity:** Asked what capacity would be at full use. **Response:** Could get about 200 but 160-170 more workable without facility issues; currently at 85; when first ADM done, at 80-81 but some kids have come in since then. **Follow-up note:** 96 students last year, so a decline of few students.
- **National partners:** Asked names of national partners. **Response:** Dr. Jesse Jackson, Best Man, Inc.—drama portion; Dr. Tia Glass, Good Seed—cultural responsiveness and curriculum; Dr. Janet Hail—curriculum mapping; Dr. House—all mathematics work (based in Atlanta but travels worldwide). **Additional note:** Dr. Jackson based in Texas but travels worldwide; all travel internationally to do training with schools; Good Seeds person based in Charlotte.
- **Leadership and ownership:** Board member commented "Refreshing" that Dr. Howard owns fact that school was about to close but that wasn't story; will rewrite story and already see improvement need to be done; no excuses or blame for why things were way they were; created plans and processes in place; "I hope to see the trajectory keep going in that way."

Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter history:** First chartered in 2013; renewed in 2023 for three years with stipulations.
- **Academic performance:** C in last three years; met growth in 2022-23 and 2023-24; exceeded growth 2024-25.
- **Status:** Was on continually low performing list in 2022-23; exited that status; not on low performing list in last two years.
- **Comparability:** Comparable to Bladen County Schools two of the last three years.
- **Compliance:** School improvement plan approved; completed leadership and teacher training; met or exceeded growth all three years (met stipulation); financial non-compliance in January 2024 due to late audit (now removed); Infinite Campus compliance ongoing.
- **Presentation by Dr. Jason Wray (Superintendent):** Opened with reference to the previous board meeting three years ago when told he would "be the young man standing behind that podium" at renewal; noted change from standing alone before board to now having full board support present.
- **Middle school academic performance (2024-25):** ELA presented with challenges noted; math presented with adjustments made to testing matrix; science 25% proficiency with new test in

science this year without retest opportunity; adjustments made to schedule—now test first day of day 10 and can retest before year ends; growth also counts toward improvements; sixth grade struggles noted; eighth graders came through in ELA and math.

- **Growth performance:** Exceeded growth in math area for first time in school's 12-year history; during August retreat, had conversation about hard pill to swallow after 12 years without exceeding growth; important to understand if everyone meets growth in area, better opportunity for school overall meeting growth; when one area misses growth, one area exceeding—hit or miss situation; "Growth is something you can hang your head on"; if struggling school not meeting growth, have to decide if doing right thing for kids.
- **High school course performance:** Strong numbers overall; biology and English 2 new tests with no chance to retest after first test; adjustments made; foundational math classes—two year/two semesters of foundations with first round 35-40%, pick up another 4-5 students and jump to 71%; don't test ninth graders (largest high school population); ninth grade used as foundational year; ninth graders already mad about being in military school; have to fight through attitude before learning; by semester halfway over, probably still have attitude; ninth grade for foundational years; tenth grade take math one first semester with retest opportunity at end of second semester (don't put in math 2); math 3 first groups going through full year of foundational courses then take EOCC; English 2 scores will count this year (over 30 students); haven't reached 30 in math one and math three yet; building as going along so won't drop when reach 30 students in categories.
- **MAP growth (3 years):** English EOC did not meet growth 2023; every year after met growth; biology new test and map one exceeded growth—huge; very proud of teachers doing work.
- **SMART goals:** Increase ELC performance grade by 5% and meet expected growth; teacher attendance and student attendance increase by 3%—if not there, students ain't learning; absent students cause issue at EOG/EOCCs; take resources and use responsibly to increase/improve student teaching and learning.
- **High school EOC growth (3 years):** Looks good over a three-year period.
- **Middle school performance continuous growth:** Over four years—12 percentage points lot; not going to get all; have to be patient; staff left when Dr. Ray arrived; in 20s, didn't want to fight battle; those that stayed—results shown; every year increase slowly but continuously; English 2 expected to be part of performance grade next year; adjustments made to matrix; more to data than looks good on surface—adjusting matrix as rules change, adding semesters if kids not successful after one year, still graduate on time; at end of day, parents don't care about Paul R. Brown being successful; care about child graduating; administrator has to know and understand that.
- **School theme:** "Do What Matters Most" hurt a lot of feelings—students, parents, teachers; for three years had to do what matters most—moving needle; nothing else mattered; couldn't come back before board with the same story; only thing that mattered was increasing and improving.
- **Enrollment growth:** Started at ~115 students three years ago; now over 260 students; running out of bus space; not turning kids back; need funding for success; moving into two-story building on campus for high school in second semester (January); high school and middle school separation needed.
- **Minnie Price (Board Chair) comments on governance and board training:** Board took charge to attack school seriously; 100% attendance at board training mandatory; every board member

scheduled appointment with Dr. Caldwell for training catch-up; working knowledge of policy making and oversight of school operation; not trying to micromanage; Dr. Wray handling that very well; plans work and staff works plan—data speaks for itself.

- **Leadership and governance:** If you don't think leadership matters, that's what turned school around; number two governance—united front between board governance and trusting leadership; results when united; any continually low performing school—should call to sit down with this board and administration to find out how getting results; another reason charter schools exist—doing things for kids in community not done before.
- **Responsibility:** School didn't blame context or kids; took full responsibility—refreshing; nothing succeeds like success; communities talk and know where schools are doing well; congratulations on turnaround story, leadership, and personal responsibility.
- **Personal experience:** Visited school; was at county commission meeting when school got grant; board almost closed school down—that close to shutdown; one person coming by himself before; now see board chair that didn't know what to say at one meeting to board chair knowing exactly what she wanted to say; amazing transformation; amazing board chair.
- **Additional comment:** Another board member visited school, had ties to Bladen County community, spoke with Dr. Wray about helping turn around board and school ideas; board did a remarkable job going from three years with stipulations to seven-year recommendation—hope happens over and over but very rare today.
- **Demographics:** Asked about a pretty equal distribution of demographics and what attributing it to. **Response:** Paul R. Brown serves five counties; biggest population African-American but high population of Indian descent—real melting pot; kids have to request to come; want to be there; parents want them to do better; that's the charge.
- **Board member appreciation:** Thanked Dr. Caldwell as well for assistance; great presentation and great work, glad to see board members here; first time this renewal cycle thanking school for putting minutes on website.
- **Dr. Eldridge's final comment:** Talked about Paul R. Brown in Houston, Texas last month at the National Charter Authorizers Conference; attended a session with exercise—here's school data, would you keep open or close? Provided only data and very uncomfortable because data important but more to school than data; specifically mentioned Paul R. Brown as example of school on life support where data would show easy decision to shut down, but school came in, inspired hope, given chance could turn around; shared this example in session saying "You guys don't know Paul Paul R. Brown and importance of leadership beyond just the data."

Concord Lake STEAM Academy

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter background:** K-8 school in Cabarrus County; first charter agreement 2016; renewed 2021 with 5-year renewal; all required renewal items submitted and process fully participated.
- **Academic performance:** Consistently at C grade; exceeded or met growth every year in the last three years.
- **Status:** Not on low-performing status in the last three years.
- **Comparability:** Comparable to local LEA in two of the last three years; comparable in subgroups across all three years.

- **Compliance and financial:** No compliance or financial concerns identified.
- **Office of Charter Schools placement recommendation:** 7-year renewal due to meeting/exceeding growth all three years and comparable performance in two of three years..
- **Principal presentation:** Mission relentless commitment to student greatness in school and in life; core values purpose, passion, integrity, and grit; enrollment growth 385 students (January 2020) to 869 students (November 2024); staff representation 33 staff children attending school; recognition #1 charter school in Cabarrus County; #2 school in the City of Kannapolis three years in a row.
- **Academic goals met:** Increase schoolwide proficiency with 2-3% incremental change; achieve financial stability with no EMO contribution; increase enrollment 5% yearly (currently met; some grade levels at capacity); 76% licensed teachers (goal 100%; targeting 60% minimum); strong student wellness focus.
- **Academic performance trends:** 2022 school goal 55%, achieved 57%; 2023 school goal 60%, achieved 61%; 2024 school goal 65%, achieved 64%; 2025 school goal 70%, achieved 63%; math proficiency 44% → 47% → 55% → 59%; reading proficiency 54% → 55% → 60% → 61%; science proficiency 66% → 66% → 71% → 79% (with previous year dip to 64%); met or exceeded state proficiency in reading, science, and math (2023-2025).
- **Student population:** EDS percentage 2024-25 64% (qualifying for free breakfast/lunch two consecutive years); demographic shift previously 30-30-30 split (Black/Hispanic/White); now 50-20-20; met or exceeded growth across subgroups except gifted students (last year) and white students (2023).
- **Key initiatives:** Implemented schoolwide Excel data tracker containing EOG scores, NWA MAP scores, benchmarks, NC check-ins, MClass reports; students labeled by subgroups, IEPs, 504s, ML, AIG, new student status; weekly PLC meetings using data for planning, monitoring, and analysis; schoolwide learning strategy implemented K-8 to ensure consistency; release model instruction I do, we do, you do, small groups, differentiation.
- **Support services:** Full-time Student Services Coordinator (licensed clinical social worker associate); monthly classroom check-ins and individual/group sessions; four Bs practiced daily be respectful, be kind, be safe, be responsible; monthly virtue programs with student recognition.
- **Academic growth areas & interventions:** Third-grade reading departmentalized team using teacher strengths and EVASS data; NWEA MAP conditional growth measures implemented; sixth-seventh grade reading working closely with curriculum resource teacher in PLCs; middle school seven-block day scheduled by student needs, not wants; personalized learning plans with quarterly progress check-ins.
- **Community engagement:** Partnership with Brooklyn Robot Foundation; after-school soccer club for K-5 students; sports offerings girls volleyball, co-ed soccer, cross country, girls and boys basketball, co-ed flag football; tryouts required due to high participation.
- **Special education services:** 109 students with IEPs; December 1 headcount 111 (13% of population); increased from one self-contained classroom to three; partnership with Emerges vendor for highly qualified EC teachers; addresses programmatic capacity constraints.
- **Operational challenges & solutions:** No buses; arrival/dismissal process for 900 students is ongoing challenge; two non-school days monthly for parent-teacher conferences; recent staff and student losses handled with strong community support.

- **Renewal request:** Requested change comparability reassessment from Cabarrus County to City of Kannapolis; based on reassessment, could potentially qualify for 10-year renewal; **school requesting 10-year renewal** based on improvements over past five years, continuous academic growth, strong relationships within school community.
- **Renewal term difference:** Regarding difference between 7-year and 10-year renewal recommendations—based on data sheet, school met or exceeded growth each of last three years and was comparable to LEA two of three years; is reason they don't qualify for 10-year renewal because rubric goes back to 2022-23 when they were seven points below district and six points below for white student subgroup. **Response:** Yes, that's correct.
- **Student residence:** How many students actually live in Kannapolis and would otherwise attend Kannapolis schools if not at your school? **Response:** Probably about 40% live in Kannapolis; pull students from Cabarrus County, Kannapolis County, and Rowan County.
- **EC growth:** Regarding growth in EC student population—this tells you that you have safe space for that population; those parents talk, and if you're delivering what their students need, they will seek you out; growth in EC population speaks volumes about staff and teachers working with those students.
- **Data collection:** Data sheet you're discussing contains valuable information; many people in state and nation collect data without knowing what to do with it; if you have formalized process for collecting and using this data and don't have proprietary ownership concerns, consider presenting this data collection process at conferences; aren't enough people paying attention to how data is actually used rather than just collected and shelved. **Response:** Will be happy to come present.

Iredell Charter Academy of Arts and Sciences

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter background:** K-8 school in Iredell/Statesville School District; first charter 2016; renewed 2021 with 5-year renewal; all required renewal items submitted; full process participation.
- **Academic performance 2022-23:** C grade, did not meet growth.
- **Academic performance 2023-25:** D grade both years, did not meet growth.
- **Comparability:** Comparable to local LEA two of three years; some subgroup comparability noted.
- **Compliance and financial:** No compliance or financial concerns.
- **Office of Charter Schools placement recommendation:** 3-year renewal based on continually low-performing status, though some comparability exists.
- **School presentation:** Enrollment growth 330 students (2016 opening) to 840 students (current year); location Troutman, North Carolina; community transformation changed from rural area (formerly had grazing cows) to developed area with student walkers; mission academic potential, data-driven, personalized learning plans, community/family collaboration, arts, science, nurturing atmosphere; mascot the Mighty Panthers; core promise building strong minds, good hearts; core values purpose, passion, integrity, grit.
- **Action requirements met:** Updated mission statement to reflect school identity of arts and sciences; resolved transportation issues; new vendor in place with zero parent complaints;

enhanced teacher communication through Infinite Campus with additional support layers; preserved small community school feel while managing growth.

- **Achievement overview (3-5 years):** Enrollment 613 (2022) to 844 (current year); demographic changes EDS increased from 30% to 60%; middle school growth 200 students (prior year) to 240 (current year); enrollment drivers small school feel, electives, arts, science, robust sports program; teacher staffing 80% certified; strategic hiring focused on student-loving teachers aligned with school identity.
- **Academic performance data:** Met growth for ELA and math; 12-point growth gain 55.6 to 67.1 (2.3 points away from meeting growth); science scores showed decline; hired new fifth and eighth-grade science teachers with science backgrounds; new curriculum aligned to NC standards and testing; outdoor learning space and resources to increase science scores.
- **Comparability and subgroup analysis:** Comparable to district two of three years; outperformed in subgroups black, English learners, Hispanic, two or more races (three consecutive years); comparable in subgroups economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, two or more races; subgroups needing continued work Asian students (17 students) and white students; 14% EC population (reduced rate); full staff of qualified EC teachers.
- **Strategic initiatives:** Refined PLC process with pre-, during-, and post-work coaching models; increased family connections for home learning resources; art integration as two-year A+ School of the Arts program (moving from art-based to art-integration school); master schedule analysis twice yearly for acceleration and remediation; added instructional leadership team member; increased classroom walkthroughs; weekly leadership team meetings with data tracking; second data day with students updating personal learning plans; each student has a "school champion."
- **Enrichment & engagement programs:** Theater productions Cinderella (tonight), Mary Poppins (spring); outdoor science learning annual trips to Kataba Center for animal dissection; art portfolios for all students; art shows and music talent shows; art competition placements; second robotics competition; virtue emphasis hard work, perseverance, kindness; Panther of the Month ceremonies; clubs art, robotics, tap dance, battle of books, spelling bee, French club.
- **Staff & professional development:** 80% certified; targeting 100%; partnership with Morland University using Title funds to support certification; lead teacher, mentor, coaching cycle model; recognized among 80 schools as "great place to work"; site visit recognized positive school culture; 1-2 weekly PLC and team huddle meetings.
- **Community engagement:** 3,000+ stakeholders (students, families, board members); K-8 student-led conferences building healthy goal-setting habits; high survey ratings for safety; SRO partnership with Town of Troutman; police/fire department collaboration; weekly parent visibility of student achievements.
- **Celebrations & community partnerships:** Soccer team two consecutive years first place in conference; fourth-grade student designed "I voted" sticker; nursing home visits with music and theater students; culinary class using school garden and vegetables; fifth-grade student ambassador program; art in park participation in Town of Troutman.
- **School improvement plan goals:** ELA 56% proficiency; math 50% proficiency; math 1 100% proficiency; science 70% proficiency; EL progress 43% goal.
- **Academic goals moving forward:** 100% grant utilization; 100% program capacity by 2027-2028 with a large wait list.
- **Renewal request:** Requesting 5-year renewal.

- **Law enforcement:** How are you working with law enforcement? **Response:** SRO is part of the Police Department and comes on campus regularly; sergeant conducts training on-site; vital part of school safety during the day; in summers, conducts safety checks; also referred us to Dove House agency and works closely on truancy monitoring.
- **Subgroup performance:** Mentioned 17 Asian students; how many white students do you have? What's accounting for that 12.7-point gap in white subgroup? **Response:** We have 401 white students; we're looking at it two ways (1) aggressive monitoring of student progress, and (2) ensuring resources at home; when 40 students joined us in middle school, many had large gaps, so we use aggressive monitoring, tutoring, and parent support; know many students have needs that must be addressed for them to learn fully at our school. **Response continued:** Gap in test data—we monitor aggressively, making sure students are equipped with everything they need; receive students with large gaps and use aggressive monitoring, tutoring, and parent support.

Cross Creek Charter School

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Academic performance summary:** ELA 45.6 performance grade (current year); math 51 performance grade (from 53.8 previous year); science 38.5 performance grade (from 57.1 previous year); performance trend D (current), C (prior), D (two years prior); growth data met expected growth in ELA, exceeded growth in math, did not meet in science; overall met growth; enrollment 407 students (current), 402 (previous years).
- **School presentation by School Administrator:** K-8 school with regional reach serving Franklin County and neighboring Warren, Wake, and Vance Counties; comparison schools Laura Mill Elementary (C), Franklin Middle (D), Royal (C), Skeder Creek Middle (C); unique position only K-8 comprehensive school; others are grades 3-5 or 6-8; explains difference in score profiles due to comprehensive testing across all grades.
- **Academic approach—levels of mastery:** Distinction between traditional grades and mastery-based learning; example student scoring 50-60% on math test—in traditional system averaged in; in mastery system, teacher reteaches, reassesses, records only when mastery demonstrated; report cards called Student Quarterly Assessments (SQAs); key differentiator of "Cross Creek Way of Learning."
- **School philosophy:** Motto "Active learners and responsible citizens"; emphasis more to school than scores; citizenship, manners, responsible citizens; project-based learning (informed by John Dewey's 1920s educational philosophy); student conduct very proud of students' behavior; many proceed to early college.
- **Academic initiatives:** 2025-26 levels per standard based on overall subject performance and academic process; focuses on all subgroups; science curriculum implements new DPI-recommended program; introduces more rigor into science curriculum; enables project-based learning as part of achievement.
- **Success stories & achievements:** Athletics first time attending state cross-country meet (proud milestone); music department superior rating and first-place rating seven consecutive years; 85% of eligible grades 5-8 students enrolled in band program; demonstrates project-based learning success; summer learning program engaging, interactive opportunity; primarily for third-grade students; K-4 program; focuses on phonics and reading comprehension for below-grade-level

readers; extracurricular activities Student Government Association, Service Club, FBLA, FCA, Beyond Borders, Hawks Helping Hawks, Mosaics clubs.

- **Community partnerships:** Blessing box for community food assistance; fall festival (coming this weekend); spring color run; trunk-or-treat activity (recently completed); Lewisburg community partnerships.
- **School improvement plan goals:** Dimension A instructional excellence and alignment implement tiered instructional team for evidence-based instruction aligned to student needs across tiers; recognition of tier placement using STAR Math assessments, STAR Reading, MClass, pre-assessments; hired instructional coaches for math and ELA (grades 3-5) for 2025-26; created schedule including "daily focus time" for individualized teacher-student support on subject deficiencies; small group instruction and differentiation based on student needs; educational coaches and teacher assistants create small groups addressing deficiencies.
- Reliable, valid systemwide screening for academics and behavior; multiple annual assessments with decision rules for targeted intervention identification; innovative restorative behavior program prevents suspensions; minimizes classroom interruption; behavior interventionist for school; administrative monitoring of attendance with required parent conferences; focus ensures students attend school to enable learning.
- Create safe, welcoming, conducive learning environment (physical, social, emotional, behavioral); increase student active learning through safe, welcoming school; school resource officer present daily on campus; building design (completed 2020) two-level pass-through to enter main building; visitors screened at office; additional screening before main building access; monthly fire drills, lockdown drills, tornado drills; students well-trained in emergency procedures; DARE program partnership; MOU with Franklin County Schools for evacuation to Lewisburg High School football field.
- **Audit and compliance:** Clean fiscal audits for last 10+ years; latest CPA finding October 24, 2025 clean audit with no findings; beginning teacher support program for veteran mentor-new teacher relationships (DPI plan compliance); more informed, hands-on school board.
- **Renewal request:** 5-year renewal.
- **Board question for Jenna:** Looking at comparison data—if I'm reading this right, in one column you show 17 points back, 5 points back, 14 points back, but then comparison shows only minus 5.1; how does that math work? Is this funky math or am I making an error? **Response:** Verified this on state accountability website because concerned made error; these are same numbers from state accountability website; also concerned math looked unusual; will pull them again, but these match what pulling from accountability data; most concerned about minus 5.1 for renewal purposes, but double-checked and those are same exact numbers from state site.
- **Board question from Dr. Rita Haire:** Could you address specific strategies you're doing for science scores? That seemed to be the weakest area; I didn't really hear details. **Response:** The program we implemented this year is program recommended by DPI; following that recommendation, designed to work with project-based learning to increase science scores; beginning era of program, so will be able to gauge effectiveness as scores rise, which intend for them to do.
- **Board question:** What's the status of your principal? **Response:** Dug into charter and realized were supposed to have two co-directors; presented this to former director, and she quit; hired two interim directors; now hired Tracy Neil full-time and Danielle Richardson coming December 1st;

will have two co-directors; given technically have elementary and middle school, having two administrators helps handle different things simultaneously; also have vice principal, especially for numbers of students.

American Leadership Academy Coastal (formerly Coastal Preparatory Academy)

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter background:** K-12 school in New Hanover County; first chartered 2016; delayed opening until 2017; renewed 2021 with 5-year renewal; all renewal requirements submitted; full process participation.
- **Academic performance:** C (2022-23), D (2023-24), C (2024-25); met growth one of last three years; comparable academically one year (this past year); subgroup comparability noted; school nutrition office withheld funding for non-compliance (noted for awareness; no ongoing financial compliance issues).
- **Office of Charter Schools placement recommendation:** 5-year renewal based on one year comparability in the last three years.
- **School presentation:** Introduced administrative team, Charter One partnership representative.
- **RAISE core values:** Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, Excellence.
- **Campus development:** Started 2017 as one-building Coastal Preparatory Academy; partnered with EMO Charter One in 2021; added grade levels each year to complete Pre-K through 12 campus; current year first graduating class (Class of 2026); multiple building expansions original building, eight-classroom unit addition, two-story junior high/high school building.
- **Historical performance & growth trajectory:** Growth progress 2022 61.2% growth; 2025 81.2% growth; significant improvement despite challenges; performance grade history 2024 D school (led to united leadership strategy); 2025 C school (12 growth-point improvement).
- **Data analysis & school grade improvement:** Response to D grade (2024) deep data analysis conducted; reviewed professional development for teachers; specialized training for growth opportunities; result improved from D to C (+12 growth points, 2024-2025).
- **EOG performance data:** Math met expected growth; grade 5 exceeded expected growth; reading met expected growth across grade levels; biology exceeded expected growth; math 1 very close to exceeding expected growth; English 2 met growth; math 3 met growth (very proud).
- **Subgroup comparisons & trends:** Students with disabilities trending higher than surrounding schools (shown by blue dot on first two images); economically disadvantaged students showing growth (noted by top gray lines and blue dots); surrounding schools trending down; ALA Coastal trending up; all subcategories trending upwards; AIG population continues to grow; teaching team delivers differentiated instruction for lower-performing students, on-grade-level students, and enrichment for higher-performing/AIG students.
- **Enrollment & community reach:** Currently serves students from eight counties; families choose school and are willing to make significant drives; growth reflects families choosing school for right reasons.
- **Academic goals (2025-26):** Increase school performance grade to B by end of 2025-2026 school year; confident in team; aligned leadership from lower to upper school.
- **Instructional strategies:** Extended junior high/high school blocks previous year 75-minute periods; current year four 90-minute blocks (per semester structure); result 35 additional minutes

of instruction for grades 7-8; skill checks implemented across board; third grade through 12th grade; focus on identifying skill gaps; NC check-ins second year of implementation; curriculum and comparative data aligned to state standards; identify deficits and enrichment opportunities.

- **Staff & campus support:** Professional learning communities (PLCs) regular PLC participation; on point with goals for targeted instruction feedback; teacher leadership successful teachers lead PLCs and staff development; targeted intervention growth support; licensure percentage upper school 55% certified; lower school 59% certified; instructional coaching instructional coach conducts walkthroughs; upper and lower school aligned on E3+ model every student, every classroom, every day; plus includes morning drop-off, afternoon dismissal, lunch duty, playground time; classroom observations.
- **Campus life & whole school experience:** Academic projects fourth-grade curriculum-aligned projects; family engagement annual fall festival highlighting family engagement and partnership; varsity sports girls volleyball second place in state championships within conference; soccer conference championship; additional sports tennis (boys/girls), cross country, basketball, softball, cheerleading, baseball.
- **Community partnerships & outreach:** NC Nourish and food bank partnership upper school twice monthly (1st and 3rd Thursday) packing meals; NASCAR Institute recent campus visit for high school automotive opportunities; Cape Fear Community College dual enrollment partnership; AP classes registered for second semester.
- **Renewal request:** Requesting 7-year renewal.
- **Subgroup analysis:** Regarding subgroup analysis—how many white students do you have? You mentioned serving many counties, but you're down 17.9 compared to New Hanover County; what are your thoughts about that? What interventions are specific to white population? **Response:** Our enrollment continues to grow, bringing different teaching and learning styles from different counties; takes time for new enrolled students to "simmer into ALA Coastal way"; call it ACE academics, culture, and enrollment—all connected in triangle; when enrollment grows, new students bring cultural factors we must stabilize; working hard using state-standard-aligned curriculum adaptations, School Net, and treatment model implementation; PLCs treat every teacher and student like their own, not just "that's my roster"; even elective teachers draw in core supports cross-curricular; for lower school, students coming from different schools brings different challenges with uniforms, dress code, and school requirements; takes time to stabilize, and they enter at all different grades throughout calendar year.
- **English learners:** Anything additional about English learners? How many EL students do you have? **Response:** We have 15 EL students 8 elementary, 3 middle school, 4 high school; this is first year with teacher specified to that role on campus; wonderful addition, teaching both junior high/high school and elementary; also teaches English 4; rare find and serves population well; that layer of support contributed and will contribute to future growth.
- **Incoming student proficiency:** For students coming in new to your culture, especially middle and high school—do you have documentation of whether they're coming in at grade level or below grade level? How far below? **Response:** When records come in with student enrollment, we have their data; traditionally, they come in below grade-level proficiency, which creates challenge to drill back to their deficits and bring them up to grade-level proficiency; when they come to us and culture shift occurs—it's like light bulb goes off and academics click; it's

combination of adopting school culture; almost like they normalize and then their academics take off; that's pattern observed as upper school campus director for third straight year.

- **Board member comment:** To go from minus 12 to minus 2.8—it's still minus, but that took tremendous work; replicate and continue that culture work; next time you won't need to ask for seven or 10; you'll have gotten there.
- **Board member comment:** Congratulations on C and met growth—best of three years; what draws students to pass hundreds of schools to come to ALA Coastal? **Response:** When we look at data and population, families may work in area making it easier; but culture is main thing we see; additionally, with growth of athletics, that advertises us far and wide; athletes on other campuses showcase sportsmanship, conduct, and school representation; families then enroll; also added two buses this year with cluster stops, which helped.

Raleigh Oak Charter School

Dialogue/Discussion Summary

- **Charter background:** K-8 school in Wake County; first chartered 2018 (5-year); renewed 2023 with 3-year renewal; all required items submitted and completed.
- **Academic performance:** C and met growth (2022-23, 2023-24); D and did not meet growth (2024-25); currently on low-performing list (first time in three years).
- **Comparability:** Not comparable to Wake County schools in any of the last three years; subgroup comparability noted.
- **Compliance and financial:** No compliance or financial issues.
- **Office of Charter Schools placement recommendation:** 5-year renewal based on meeting growth two or three years and current low-performing list status.
- **School Presentation:** Introduced administrative team members, board members present, Prestige School Solutions partners.
- **School context & turnaround narrative:** 2021 (Aftermath of Pandemic) foundational leadership turnover, board turnover, staff turnover; poor financial decisions that crippled school; temporary facility inadequate for staff and student services; lacking strong charter school systems.
- **2022-2023:** Relocated to second site; continued operational inconsistencies, overworked staff, administrative turnover, financial pressure; despite challenges families remained committed to mission/vision; community gave purpose to continue fighting.
- **2024-2025 turnaround point:** Stable, committed board bringing governance and financial oversight; first year operating with economic surplus (not deficit); expanded administration with new, result-focused leadership; tightened internal processes; laid groundwork for "new school"; immediate recovery started regained family confidence, staff confidence, significant enrollment increase; August 2024 moved to permanent building (result of turnaround, not beginning).
- **Academic data narrative—"story of resilience and progress":** Three-year school report card trends 2021 D grade; 2022 9-point increase; obtained C grade; 2023-24 maintained C grade; 2024-25 did not meet data; academic growth met last three years.
- **Math proficiency progress:** 2022 32.8% proficiency; 2024 42.6% proficiency; growth 9.8 percentage points in two years; comparison Wake County +5.4 points, state +4.8 points over same period; Raleigh Oak improving nearly twice as fast as district and state.

- **Reading proficiency progress:** 2022 48.8% proficiency; 2024 56% proficiency; growth 7.2 percentage points; comparison state +1.7 points, Wake County increases noted; Raleigh Oak's growth rate more than four times state average; positioned to close state gap within 3-4 years; surpass state in reading within 2 years.
- **Academic achievements:** North Carolina Academic Growth Reward (previous year) affirming recognition of growth despite acknowledging gaps.
- **Strategic improvement initiatives:** Operational structure improvements expanded academic and support teams; completely reorganized organizational model; dean of specialized learning oversees all EC departments (largest department); dean of pedagogy ensures constant conversation between public Waldorf model and NC state standards alignment; expanded intervention team three full-time academic interventionists; strengthened tier 1 MTSS fully implemented schoolwide; two full-time behavior support specialists regulated bodies prepared to receive and learn.
- **Academic alignment—literacy model:** Piloted last year; continuing this year; schoolwide diagnostic literacy model; merges public Waldorf tenants (storytelling, artistic expression) with research-based instruction.
- **Teacher investment:** Significant focus on teacher needs; analyzed what teachers report needing; reviewed data; addressed needs of new student population from significant enrollment increase; ensures teachers are equipped to serve all students with focus on "all means all."
- **Governance:** Stable and engaged governance over the past year; enables strategic planning, fiscal health, mission alignment; all components support confidence in long-term success.
- **School culture & unique characteristics:** Physical campus permanent home (moved August 2024); laid roots in Southeast Raleigh; permanent facility demonstrates mission commitment; features outdoor classrooms, exploration ponds, art and movement studios, open-air classrooms, community gardens; building facilitates all promised educational experiences.
- **Educational model—public Waldorf:** North Carolina's only public Waldorf school; no other charter school in NC provides public Waldorf education; age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate curriculum; whole-child education addresses hands, hearts, and minds; three-layer child development approach required for true learning receipt; balance and intention in instruction delivery; over 1,000 Waldorf schools worldwide; only 61 public Waldorf charter schools in US; only one in North Carolina; only one south of Pennsylvania, north of Florida, west of Oklahoma.
- **Community constituencies served:** Local community Southeast Raleigh students walking to school (vs. 20-30 min bus commute); regional 13 different counties represented; "disaffected" group homeschoolers and public education opt-outs returning to system (anecdote "this is only public school I'd ever send my children to"); national relocation magnet families from California, New York relocating to access Waldorf model; international families South Korea and worldwide seeking public Waldorf education (model typically costs \$20,000-\$30,000; made accessible through charter).
- **Community connection & resilience:** Most teachers with school since beginning; most families with school since beginning; enrollment growth 64.9% increase; community advocates and has spread message; afterschool festivals, field trips; community shows up and works together; creates not just school but home for 13-county community; resilient community through challenges.

- **Enrollment data:** Prior year (2023-24) 300 students; current year (2024-25) 573 students; current facility capacity 600 students; EC headcount increase 130% over past year; serve diverse range of students from all walks of education; significant homeschool integration program and population.
- **Looping model & student trajectory:** First kindergarten class that opened Raleigh Oak still followed through with looping model; first-year kindergarten students now in sixth grade (two-year loops); significant number of families stayed from first year to now; allows tracking of student progression despite new student enrollment dips.
- **Addressing new student integration challenges:** Technology barrier homeschooled and traditional Waldorf students arrive with strong academics but limited tech exposure; example homeschooled Waldorf student strong watercolor skills, excellent comprehension, never used computer; beginning-of-year reading assessment lowest in grade (red zone), placed in intervention; by January well above grade level (blue zone); barrier wasn't capacity; barrier was computer use; solution invested in Chromebook carts, teaching technology use meaningfully (not just at assessment time); not throwing multiple things at once; supports meaningful technology integration.
- **Cultural integration:** New families joining takes time to adapt to Waldorf approach; student perspective "I'm not learning anything; all I'm doing is having fun" (misunderstanding learning model); Waldorf approach storytelling, art, movement, not seated computer work; students need time to adjust to educational approach; once adjustment occurs growth evident; data dips during transition; growth follows adaptation; accept students at all ages/grades (unlike some schools saying post-5th grade entry doesn't work well); belief meet children where they are; exceed their perceived potential.
- **Renewal request:** Requesting 7-year renewal.
- **Performance dip:** In your presentation, looking at three years previous to 2024-25, there was dip between 2023-24 and 2024-25; pretty big dip; additionally, enrollment increased over 86 students; what are your thoughts about why that dip occurred? **Response:** We've been in three different schools; this is third; when we move, many new families join us; what I see in dip is new families joining and it taking time for students to adapt to our educational approach; students sometimes say "I'm not learning anything; all I'm doing is having fun"; that's what we want them to think—they are learning through doing; if I'm not on computer, not being told/seated, allowed to get up, do art, hear stories—is this really school? Takes time for students to adapt; once they do, that's where we see growth; we see dip, then big growth after adjustment; when we move, students join at different ages; some public schools say it's not best practice to have students join after fifth grade because they won't adapt; but we believe in mission of receiving children where they are and getting them where they need to go; we always accept children in all classes, believing we can meet needs and exceed their perceived potential; when I see dip, it's new arrivals; when we see growth, it's when they internalize benefits and really see what we offer.
- **Building capacity:** What is the capacity of your new building? **Response:** We have a capacity of 600; we're currently at 573.
- **Additional information:** We experienced 64.7% growth; we've also increased our EC headcount by 130% over last year; we're space welcoming diverse students from all walks of education; we have a huge homeschool integration program and population as part of our school population.
- **Board member comment:** I thought you went from where you were in 2023-24 to 300 in 2024-25 to where you are at 573 this year; this year; that's significant.

- **Board member encouragement:** Let me encourage you; I don't know what will happen with renewals, but I'd really like to see—and I'm sure you have it—trajectory of students who have stayed with you versus students coming in, because it does take while; one of benefits of your school is looping model; I had opportunity to have class for two years—fifth grade and sixth grade; that class was first kindergarten class ever at Raleigh Oak; I can tell you that even from that group, we have significant number of families that stayed with us from first year through now.
- **Board member comment:** I think you're going to be commended for innovative model and work you're doing; you don't get to those numbers if parents aren't finding you attractive; those metrics are positive; and then there's but; I think it's reach for seven-year renewal; to qualify for seven-year, you have to meet or exceed growth each of last three years; you haven't; you have to be comparable to local district at least two of three years; you haven't met that metric; in some cases, like last year, 21.5 points off—that's big gap; sometimes metric should be 3.57, but shouldn't be 21.5; when we examine subgroup data, you're also not at that metric in every subgroup.
- **Comment continued:** I want to reiterate that you're commended for the innovative model; good things happening; families choose you; I think seven might be a stretch, but we're not voting today; other opinions will be shared; thank you for your time.

Adjourn: 2:30 pm